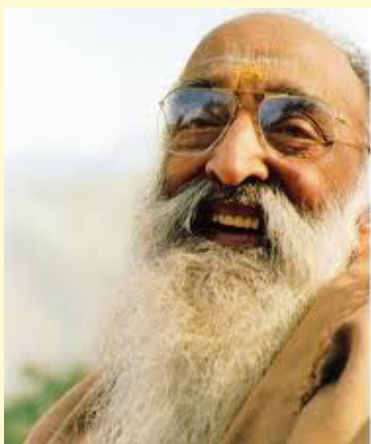




Usher In 2012 With This Wisdom!

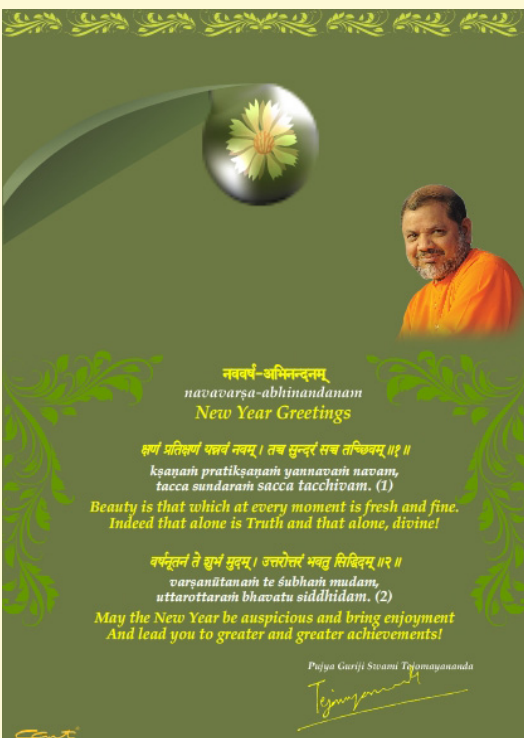
At the start of 2012, our beloved and learned teachers at Chinmaya Mission have sent all of us at CMLA messages that we should make our own. As our Acharya Mahadevji has said, "Let us move with a new awareness of the messages from our gurus, in every transaction with the phenomenal world in the year to come and in all the years to follow."



Time is eternal it never changes. We can surely change for the better. When we change it becomes a New Year.

May all members grow up in the vision and dynamism. May your urge to serve grow day by day.

When this happens then only there can be a new year for you and the world around you.



Reflection...

Only –

- when you think like a student
- you can guide like a teacher
- when you feel like the child
- you can feed like a mother
- when you admire like a fan
- you can perform like an artist
- when you can love like God
- you can seek Him like a devotee!

HEARTY WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR!

Please watch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C12gV0hTR0s&feature=youtu.be>

Chinmaya Yatris Explore Hinduism in S.E.Asia



The joyous group

About 50 Chinmaya yatris from various centers in the U.S and Canada including of course CMLA, Bakersfield, San Diego, Chicago, Michigan, Niagara Falls and Toronto left the shores of North America on Nov.23 on a tour led by Swami Ishwarananda through the South East Asian nations of Cambodia, Thailand and Bali-Indonesia.

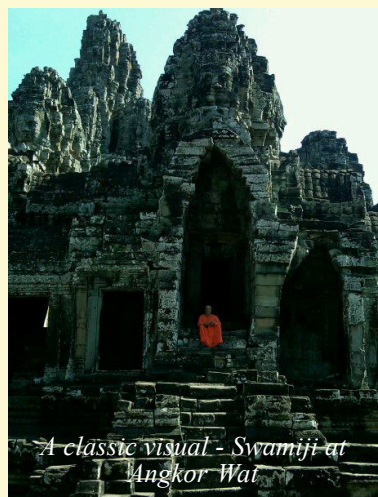
The two week long trip was at once, a visit to the well known historical sites in cities like Bangkok, and also an appointment with Hinduism's history. While it's one thing to read about the pervading influence of Hinduism in the region and hear about it, it was quite another experience for yatris to actually encounter it.

They participated in devotional rituals at ancient Bali temples, observed the renderings of the Ramayana in Thailand, the deities of Indra and Ganesha at various Bangkok street corners, watched enthralling cultural shows in Bali and Bangkok and marveled at the beauty of Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

As is Swamiji's practice, at several points in the yatra, there were lectures on the spread of Hinduism in the region as well as a study of the Buddhism that flourishes now. Deftly he compared and contrasted Hindu thought with Buddhism which allowed yatris to grasp the lingering influence of Hindu philosophy in South East Asia even today. Travelers were also able to meet and listen to Buddhist monks who discussed their faith with Swamiji. At various spots, apart from lectures, Swamiji led the yatris in meditation sessions.

Yatris also communed with nature enjoying the rich flora, spectacular volcanoes, emerald green vistas and meticulously laid out gardens at the resorts.

Anecdotes and pictures of smiling yatris that were shared with other Chinmaya members on their return to the U.S., bespoke of the good times and learning that had happened in the yatra.



A classic visual - Swamiji at Angkor Wat



Yatris do the devotionals at Tirta Empul temple, Bali



Hindu images at Bangkok airport

Upanishads Come Alive!

The Mandukya Upanishad speaks of two birds perched on a tree: One enjoying the fruits of the tree, while the other is a mute spectator. They are but metaphors for the individual soul and Ishwara. It is the Jiva, says the Upanishad that indulges in the vagaries of life whereas Ishwara remains unperturbed and untouched, a mere observer of all the activity. The allegory of the two birds is about the two selves present in every human.

At the annual Sevanjali fundraiser that was held in Nov.2011 in Chinmaya Rameshwaram, Swami Ishwarananda penned a simple situation to bring home this point in an uncomplicated manner so even the child in the audience would understand when it was being performed by a humorous ventriloquist and his two talkative birds:

Jeeva is seated at the lip of the stage, while Ishwara sits taller and center stage.

Jeeva (*engrossed in eating the food off a platter, pauses delightedly then looks up at Ishwara*): Wow! That was delicious! You should try it sometime. You just don't know what it feels like to eat this gulab jamun!

Ishwara (*sighing heavily*): You keep munching all day...when do you actually stop?

Jeeva: Why should I? I enjoy all things that life has to offer....I'm not like you! See how thin I am....(*pompously*) I workout all day with my mouth!!!!

Jeeva (*again pops something in the mouth*): OMG! Yuck! Awful! Terrible! This is so bitter!

Ishwara: What? You didn't enjoy that? Isn't it also part of what life offers?

Jeeva (*coughing, sticking tongue out*): Are you kidding? (*disgustedly*) It is like eating a raw olive....a coffee bean....a....a....everything horrible!

Ishwara: So you swing between these two things... between what keeps you amused and what doesn't, eh?

Jeeva: Who doesn't? I am not dumb and lazy like you, sitting around all day doing nothing!

Ishwara: Basically then, this is your life... sometimes happy and sometimes sad...

Jeeva (*irritated*): Do I have a choice? Stop your sermon NOW!

Ishwara is silent.

Jeeva (*looks up, shakes his head and mutters*): I wonder what he does all day long....

Again looks up and then facing audience: You folks understand him at all? Nobody wants to be like him. He is irritating!!!

Ishwara continues to sit silently.

Jeeva (*needling Ishwara*): I know what you are thinking!

Ishwara (*calmly*): What?

Jeeva: That I am too caught up in the world, right? That I am stupid and vulnerable! That I don't know how to make choices in life?

Ishwara (*expressionlessly*): That's what you are saying

Jeeva: I say what YOU think!

Ishwara: Not exactly. Because I don't think!

Jeeva (*laughs loudly his whole body shaking, then turns to audience*): It is fun to have him around....doing nothing, thinking nothing....You must even give sermons without thinking? Ha Ha!!

Ishwara: I don't give sermons. I just watch

Jeeva (*puzzled*): Watch what? What I do?

Ishwara: And also what you think

Jeeva: Wow! You watch what I think...eh? That's scary!!

Ishwara: It is scary to you, not to me...I don't take part in it...I don't take it seriously

Jeeva: You don't? Then what do you do the whole day?

Ishwara: I am with myself...enjoying my own company!

Jeeva: Oh! I can't stand that idea.

Ishwara: If you can't enjoy your own company... why inflict it on others??

Jeeva (*quietly*): That hurts! Really.....

Ishwara bends head down... silent and thoughtful

Ishwara: You know when you can become like me? When you learn to be unaffected irrespective of whether something is fun or no fun....in that you enjoy and, that you don't. Watch, and you will start enjoying your own company!

Jeeva: Will I?

Ishwara: Sure you can, and will. That is meditation while living. Meditation in action.

Jeeva: If I don't find things to be fun...what excitement will I have in life?

Ishwara: Life itself is fun. Going through all things in life, just observing and not swinging from one side to another, just remaining neutral, makes it great fun. Okay, tell me this, what is the taste of your tongue?

Jeeva (*shrugs*): No taste

Ishwara: Exactly. Just as the tongue does not have any taste, and yet can taste anything....so also is life. Don't get caught up in one thing and lose everything else!

Jeeva: Whoa. Jeez!

Ishwara: Just be, have fun!



Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan: nimmicmla@gmail.com

Many thanks to this issue's contributors: Priya Raghuram, Sanjay Bhatt, Girish Patel